

Usborne Parents' Cards

50



Things to do
with your
Toddler



Wildlife watch

When outside, look out for 'minibeasts' with your toddler. You could count spiders' legs, look for worms wriggling in the earth, or overturn stones in search of woodlice.

Spiders' webs can be fascinating to small children.



- Give ants crumbs to carry and watch where they take them.

- A magnifying glass makes looking at bugs even better, especially if you can trap the bug in a jar first.

- Visit a pond and point out any wildlife – just keep a careful watch on your toddler near water.

- If you have an old fish tank or a large bowl, keep a snail for a day with some earth and lettuce leaves.

Discourage toddlers from picking up small creatures as their fingers may squash them, and always put bugs back where you found them.

This box is packed with ideas for activities, games, action rhymes and other fun things to do with your toddler.

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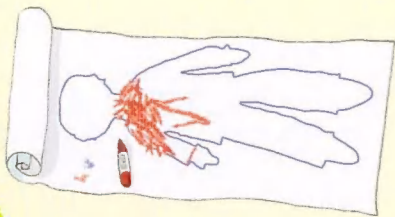
Size charts

Toddlers are often keen to see 'who is the biggest'.



For toddlers, there are few things more fascinating than themselves, and they are often keen to know how big they are. Your toddler may love having her height measured.

- You could mark your toddler's height on a door frame or height chart, to show how she's growing.
- You could also show your toddler's real size by doing a paper cut-out of her. Ask your toddler to lie down on a large piece of paper and draw around her with a crayon or marker.
- Let your toddler colour in the outline, then cut it out and tape it to a wall.



Make-believe

From around the age of two, many children begin to play make-believe games. Providing props, costumes and toys can encourage your toddler and make this even more fun.



*Small toys are
a good starting
point for make-
believe games.*

- The simplest props often work best – an old rug can be a magic carpet, a box of raisins can become precious jewels.

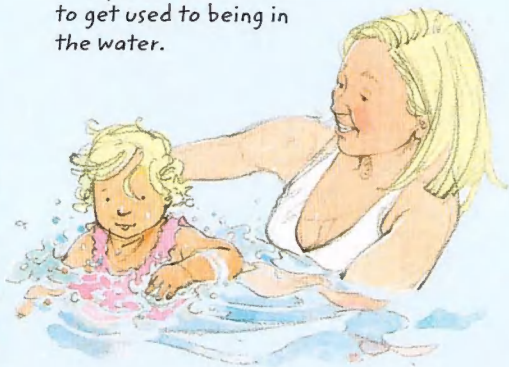
- Provide your toddler with big boxes – these can become houses or caves to hide in, or cars to ride in. Smaller boxes make good beds for toys.



- Encourage your toddler to make up stories. Listen to, and talk about, what she has to tell you.

Swimming

*Give your toddler time
to get used to being in
the water.*



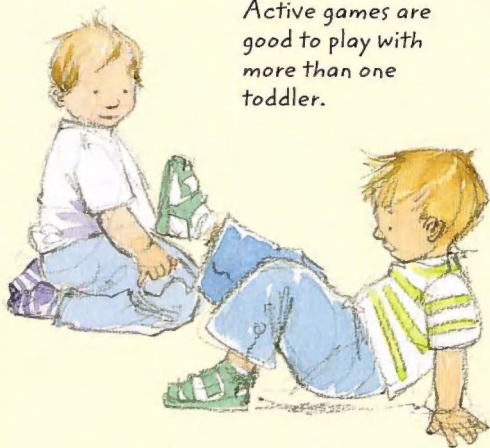
Taking your toddler swimming will give her plenty of exercise as well as helping to build her confidence in the water. If your toddler seems unsure about being in the pool, follow her lead and don't rush her.

- Your toddler may feel more confident if she's wearing armbands, or holding onto a flotation aid, such as a foam woggle.
- Play games in the water to make swimming fun. You could try action rhymes such as 'If you're happy and you know it, splash your hands'.
- 'Whoosh' your toddler across the water then encourage her to hold onto the side of the pool when you get there.

Supervise your toddler at all times in water, even if she is using a flotation aid.

Energetic games

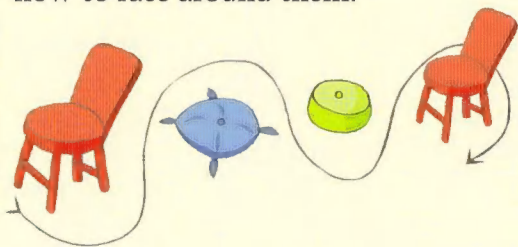
Active games are good to play with more than one toddler.



Two-year-olds are full of energy, so it's good to have ideas for active, rough and tumble games up your sleeve. These games will also help improve your toddler's co-ordination.

- Ask your toddler to copy what you do. Keep your actions simple so they are easy to follow, such as putting your arms in the air, jumping on the spot or twirling around.

- Set up obstacles, such as chairs or cushions, and show your toddler how to race around them.



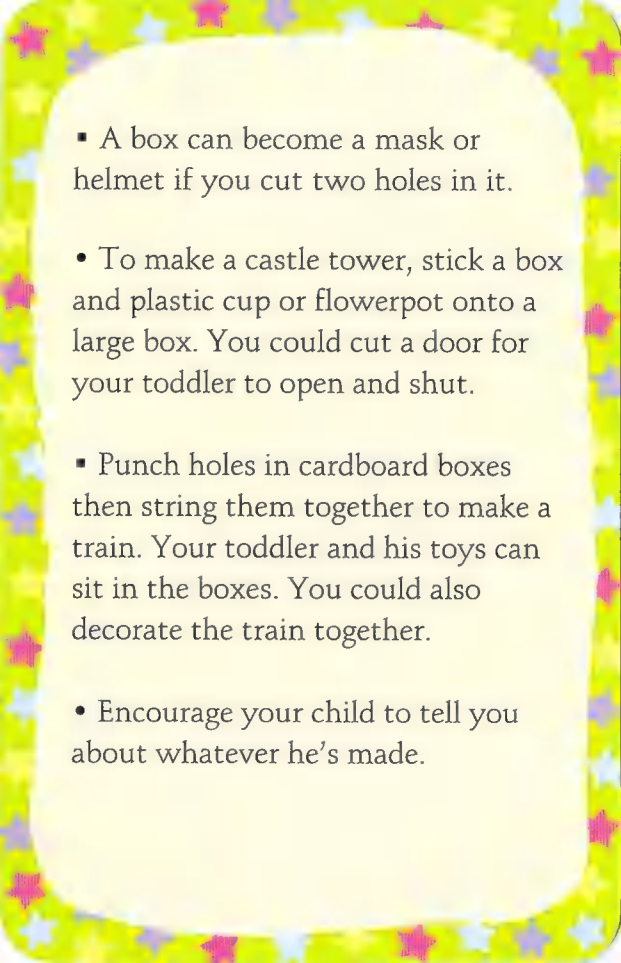
- Play tag or hide and seek with your toddler, or with other adults and their toddlers.

Make and build



*Let your child
experiment with how
things fit together.*

From around the age of two, many children love building large objects out of cardboard boxes, tubes and plastic bottles. Help your child to stick, fold and tape if necessary.



- A box can become a mask or helmet if you cut two holes in it.

- To make a castle tower, stick a box and plastic cup or flowerpot onto a large box. You could cut a door for your toddler to open and shut.

- Punch holes in cardboard boxes then string them together to make a train. Your toddler and his toys can sit in the boxes. You could also decorate the train together.

- Encourage your child to tell you about whatever he's made.

Toddler cooks



*Make sure you wash
your toddler's hands
beforehand.*

From the age of two, toddlers can really start to enjoy cooking, especially the part that involves handling the food and eating the results. Never leave your toddler unsupervised in the kitchen though.

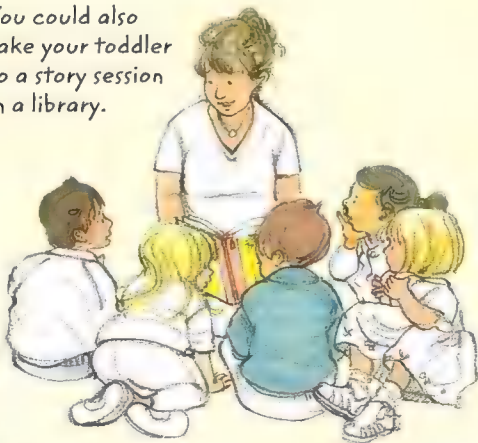
- Give your toddler some biscuit dough (packet stuff is fine), and help her to roll it out. Then show her how to press shaped cutters into it, and lay the biscuits on a tray. When the biscuits are cooked, let your toddler sprinkle on sugar, or squeeze on some icing.
- You could provide a pizza base, some sauce, and toppings in bowls. Help your toddler spoon on the sauce, then add whatever she wants on top.

Keep your toddler well away from the oven and keep any dangerous equipment well out of reach.

Tell me a story

You may find your toddler asks you to make up stories for her. You could try basing your stories around everyday events in your toddler's life, such as telling the story of her day.

You could also take your toddler to a story session in a library.



- A photograph of your toddler could provide a starting point for a story. You could say, 'One day, Ella went to the beach,' for example.

- Use a favourite toy as the focus in a story. You could begin, 'Teddy decided to go for a walk,' and walk the toy across your lap as you say the words.

- Once the story is familiar, you could give your toddler the toy, so she can act out the story.



Water painting

If your toddler wants to paint, but you can't face too much mess, you could try out water painting instead. All you need is a bucket of water and a brush or sponge.

Your toddler could also try water painting with a broom. Point out the watery trail it leaves behind.



- Stick some paper to a fence or wall. Give your toddler a bucket of water and a brush, roller or sponge to make pictures.
- If you have access to paving slabs, your toddler could make pictures on those instead, then watch them vanish as they dry.
- Dribbling water out of a watering can can be fun, too. Help your toddler form a circle, square or whatever shape she chooses.

If it's a cold day, dress your toddler up in waterproof clothes and boots first. Always supervise your child when playing with water.

Finger puppets

Many older toddlers enjoy making their toys act out stories. You could make simple finger puppets for your toddler, so he has new characters for his make-believe play.



Encourage your toddler to play with his finger puppets with his friends.

- Draw a basic figure onto thin cardboard. Let your toddler scribble on some colour with crayons before you cut the puppet out.

- Next, tape a loop of cardboard to the back of the puppet. Slide it onto your toddler's finger and show him how to make it move and 'talk'.



- If you make another puppet, your toddler can have one on each hand and make them 'talk' to each other.

Dressing-up games

Keep a box of dressing-up clothes, including old hats, scarves and handbags, for younger toddlers to play with. Older toddlers may also enjoy dressing-up games.

Toddlers may want to include their toys in dressing-up games.



- Using clothes from your dressing-up box, have a race to see who can put all their clothes on first.
- Help your toddler with tricky fastenings, such as zips and buttons, showing her how they work.
- Dress up for a cold day, then a hot one. You could dress up as different characters and see if your toddler can guess who you are, then swap over.



An action rhyme
to do with your toddler



If you're happy and you know it,
clap your hands,
(clap your hands together)

If you're happy and you know it,
clap your hands,
(clap your hands together)

If you're happy and you know it,
and you really want to show it,
If you're happy and you know it,
clap your hands.
(clap your hands together)

For other verses say:
stamp your feet/bounce around/
say 'We are!'

An action rhyme
to do with your toddler

Do your ears hang low?

*(touch your ears with your hands then
bring your hands down to your waist)*

Do they wobble to and fro?

(swing your arms from side to side)

Can you tie them in a knot?

(roll your hands over each other)

Can you tie them in a bow?

(bring your hands together then move them apart)

**Can you throw them over your shoulder,
like a regimental soldier?**

*(put your hands together, palms up, and
pretend to throw something over your shoulder)*

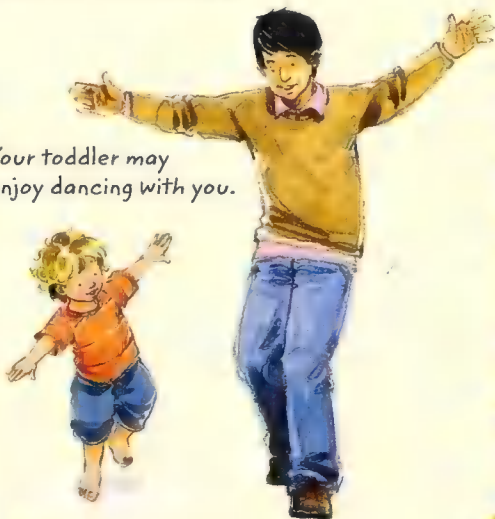
Do your ears hang low?

(repeat the first actions again for the last line)

Dance time

Toddlers love moving to music, and most will do so instinctively. Dancing can help toddlers burn off energy as well as improving their co-ordination.

Your toddler may enjoy dancing with you.



- Put on some music and move together, then turn it off and stay still. When you turn the music on again, both start moving.

- Ask your child to copy your dance moves, then encourage him to dance however he wants to, and start to copy him.

- Choose music that lends itself to actions, such as something with a strong beat so you can stamp like an elephant, for instance. Marching to music is also great fun.



An action rhyme
to do with your toddler



Head, shoulders, knees and toes,
knees and toes.

Head, shoulders, knees and toes,
knees and toes.

And eyes and ears
and mouth and nose.

Head, shoulders, knees and toes,
knees and toes.

*(Stand facing your toddler and, as you sing,
touch the relevant part of your body with
both hands. Encourage your toddler
to do the same.)*

An action rhyme
to do with your toddler

The wheels on the bus go round and round,
Round and round; round and round.

The wheels on the bus go round and round,
All day long!

(roll one hand over the other on the word 'round')

The people on the bus go chat, chat, chat,
Chat, chat, chat; chat, chat, chat.

The people on the bus go chat, chat, chat,
All day long!

*(snap together your fingers and
thumb on the word 'chat')*

The wipers on the bus go swish, swish, swish,
Swish, swish, swish; swish, swish, swish.

The wipers on the bus go swish, swish, swish,
All day long!

*(point index fingers and swing
forearms on the word 'swish')*

Action rhymes

Most toddlers love action rhymes. Try out the ones on the cards in this pack. You may need to repeat them a number of times before your toddler can copy your actions.

Try doing action rhymes with your toddler and his friends, as toddlers enjoy copying each other.



An action rhyme
to do with your toddler

This is the way the lady rides,
Trit trot, trit trot.

This is the way the lady rides,
Trit trot, trit trot, trit trot.

(raise your legs up and down on the spot)

This is the way the gentleman rides,
Gallop-gallop, gallop-gallop.

This is the way the gentleman rides,
Gallop-gallop-gallop!

(move quickly around the room)

This is the way the farmer rides,
Hobble-dee hoy! Hobble-dee hoy!

This is the way the farmer rides,
Hobble-dee, hobble-dee,
and down into a ditch!

*(jump around the room
and, on the last line, fall over)*

How to use these cards

- These cards are designed to give you easy, inexpensive ideas for activities you can do with your toddler.
- While you are playing together, your toddler will be learning new skills, finding out about the world and, most importantly, having fun.
- All children are different and develop at their own pace, so always be guided by your toddler when choosing activities.

▪ At this stage, toddlers will probably make it clear if they're not keen to do something. If your toddler doesn't want to do an activity, just try it again another day.

• From around this age, your toddler will be able to do many more things on her own, such as hold a crayon, or use cutlery. The activities in this pack will encourage this new-found dexterity.

▪ If you would like to try out more activities, and read general parenting information, go to **www.usborne-quicklinks.com** and type in the keywords 'entertain toddlers'.

Fun with food

Having fun with food can encourage your toddler to try something new as well as helping him to enjoy mealtimes.



A picnic, inside or outdoors, can provide a welcome change to mealtime routines.

- Show your toddler how to make a face using pieces of fruit. You could make eyes with slices of kiwi fruit, use an orange for a smiley mouth and pieces of apple for ears.

- Play food colour games with older toddlers, where you sort food onto different plates according to colour.

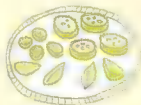
Red food:

Cherry tomatoes, halved red grapes, strawberries



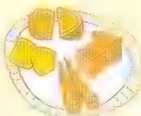
Green food:

Sliced cucumber, sliced apple, avocado, halved green grapes



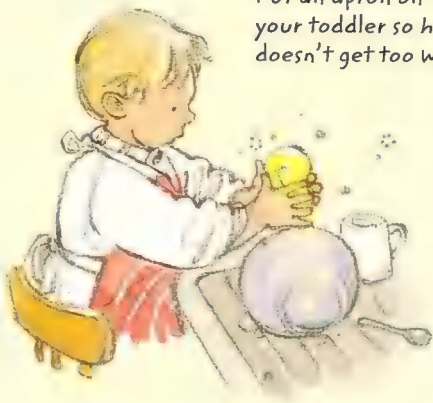
Orange food:

Satsuma segments, small chunks of sweet potato, cheese



Washing up

Put an apron on
your toddler so he
doesn't get too wet.



Even if it's a chore for you, your toddler will probably love having a go at the washing up. You might want to put a towel on the floor first, in case that's where the water ends up.

- Stand your toddler on a chair in front of the sink, staying close by to make sure he doesn't fall.
- Fill the sink, or a washing-up bowl, with warm water and let your toddler add the washing-up liquid. You could have fun splashing or making bubbles before you begin.
- Let your toddler add the dishes himself and then show him how to scrub the dishes with a brush or sponge.

Supervise your toddler closely. You may only want to give him plastic things to wash, to avoid breakages.

Weather chart

As long as they have suitable clothes on, toddlers can experience all kinds of weather.



From the age of two, toddlers may begin to notice how the weather changes. You could keep a chart to increase your toddler's awareness.

- To make a weather chart, draw, colour and cut out simple paper suns, grey rain clouds, white fluffy clouds and falling snow.
- Write the days of the week on a basic chart. Help your toddler to decide which weather pictures to stick on for each day.
- Talk about what clothes you wear in different kinds of weather and all the different things you can do.

Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday	Sunday
						



Necklaces

Making necklaces can be an absorbing activity for older toddlers.



As soon as your toddler can thread small objects onto string, she will really enjoy making necklaces. You can use beads, cut up straws or cereal rings. Turn over to find out how to make painted pasta necklaces.

- First, squeeze different coloured paint into plastic cups and put some pasta in each cup. Stir the pasta around, then remove it with a spoon and put it on some kitchen paper to dry.



- Once the pasta is dry, cut a piece of string long enough to make a necklace, then hold one end of the string while your toddler threads the pasta onto the other. Finally, tie the ends of the string together to make the necklace.

Supervise your toddler carefully to make sure none of the pasta ends up in her mouth.

Sand play

Provide plastic scoops, bowls, pots and other toys for your toddler to play with.



Most toddlers will happily play in sand for some time. If you don't have a sandpit, you could fill a small paddling pool or plastic tray with sand.

- Show your toddler how to make sand castles with upturned buckets or plastic cups. He may enjoy knocking the castles down as much as building them.

- Hide small toys or shells in the sand for your toddler to find.

- Trace drawings in the sand of animals or faces. Ask your toddler to guess what kind of animal it is and encourage him to draw patterns of his own.

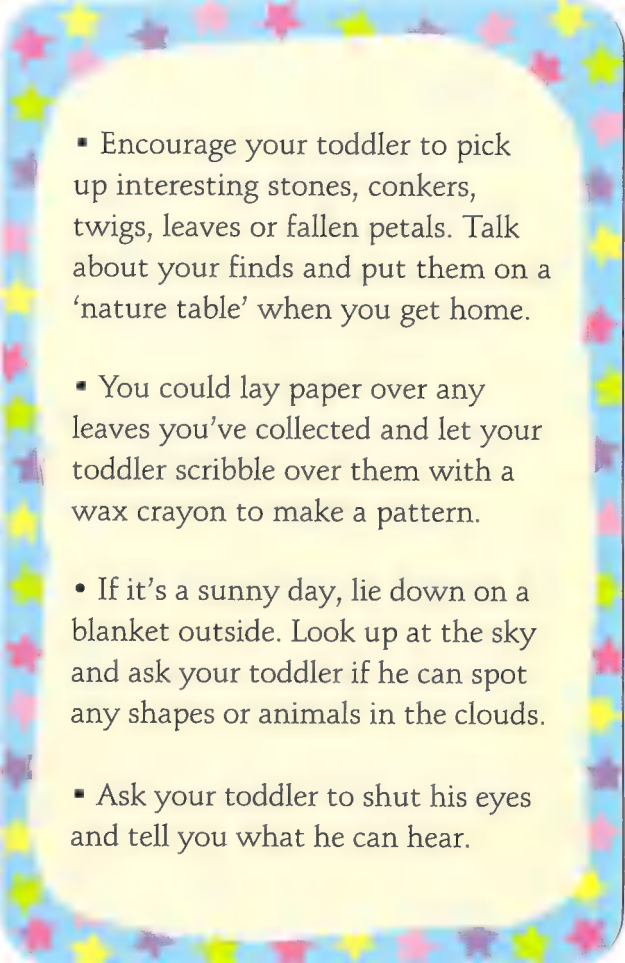
Always use play sand, not builders' sand, and watch to make sure it doesn't end up in your child's mouth.

Nature walk

Most toddlers love being outside and looking at nature. Plan a trip to the countryside or a park, and take a small bucket so that your toddler can collect up nature souvenirs.

If you have to walk along a pavement, make sure your toddler holds onto the pushchair, or use reins.





- Encourage your toddler to pick up interesting stones, conkers, twigs, leaves or fallen petals. Talk about your finds and put them on a 'nature table' when you get home.

- You could lay paper over any leaves you've collected and let your toddler scribble over them with a wax crayon to make a pattern.

- If it's a sunny day, lie down on a blanket outside. Look up at the sky and ask your toddler if he can spot any shapes or animals in the clouds.

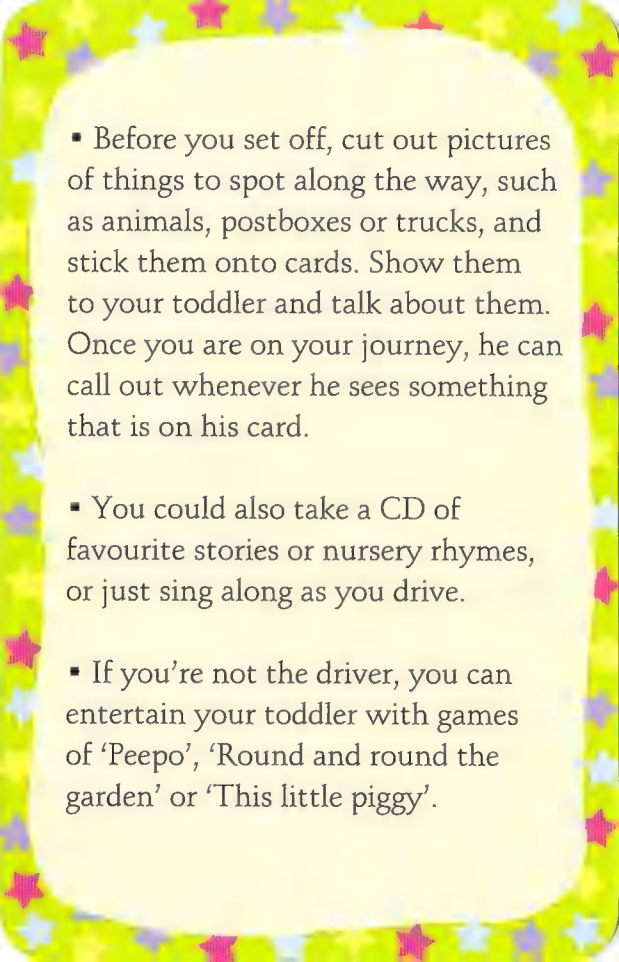
- Ask your toddler to shut his eyes and tell you what he can hear.

Car journeys



You could give
your toddler
one of his
books to look
at in the car.

Car journeys with toddlers can be tricky. If your journey is a long one, take a variety of snacks and try to stop every couple of hours to let your toddler run around and let off steam.



- Before you set off, cut out pictures of things to spot along the way, such as animals, postboxes or trucks, and stick them onto cards. Show them to your toddler and talk about them. Once you are on your journey, he can call out whenever he sees something that is on his card.

- You could also take a CD of favourite stories or nursery rhymes, or just sing along as you drive.

- If you're not the driver, you can entertain your toddler with games of 'Peepo', 'Round and round the garden' or 'This little piggy'.

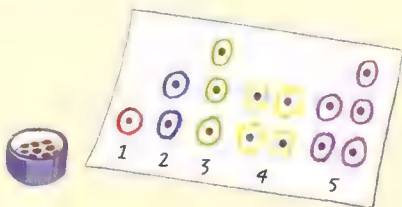
Number fun

Toddlers love finding things and you can help them recognize numbers with a 'number hunt' game. Write the numbers one to five on pieces of card and hide them around the room, then ask your toddler to find them.



- For another numbers game, write the numbers one to five on a piece of paper, then draw the corresponding number of circles above each number.

- Give your toddler a bowl of raisins and show her how to put one raisin in each circle. Count with her as she does it. (You could use dry cereal instead of raisins.)



- When all the circles are filled, point out the number on the paper.

Secret dens

Most toddlers love playing in their own den as it gives them a chance to play in a safe, secret place. Any den is exciting for toddlers because it's different, private – and theirs.

*If you have a tent
you could put it up
indoors and use
it as a den.*



- You can easily make a den for your toddler by pegging a blanket between two sturdy chairs, or draping a large sheet over a table, so that its sides touch the floor.

- Put toys in the den to encourage your toddler to play make-believe games there.

- You could put in empty boxes so your toddler can turn them into whatever he wants, such as an imaginary cooker or a bed for his toys. You could also add cushions and pillows to make it extra comfortable.

Water play

Most toddlers love water, and water play can take place inside or out. If it's a rainy day, head out with coats, umbrellas and boots and have fun splashing in puddles.



- For indoor water play, fill a big, plastic bowl with water and put it on the floor on a towel. Add spoons, jugs, sieves and cups so your toddler can have fun measuring and pouring as well as splashing.



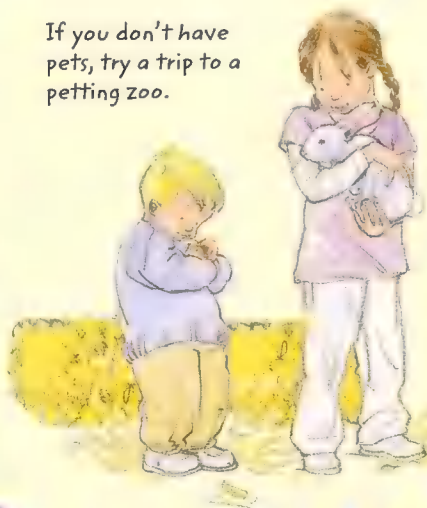
- On a sunny day you could throw water-filled balloons outdoors. Make it part of the game if a balloon bursts, so your child isn't alarmed.

*Always supervise your child
when playing with water.*

Animal magic

Animals are fascinating for toddlers and most love games based around them, as well as watching or stroking real animals whenever they have the opportunity.

*If you don't have
pets, try a trip to a
petting zoo.*



- If your toddler has toy animals, encourage make-believe games where she cares for her animals and plays with them.

- Cut pictures of animals from magazines into two or three pieces. Ask your toddler to put the pictures back together or have fun mixing them around.

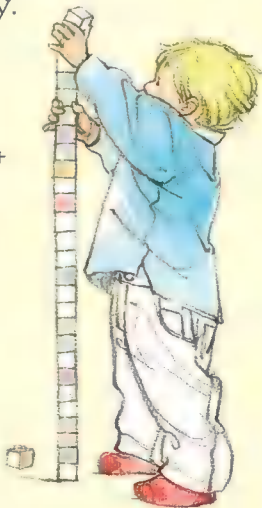


- Draw, trace or print out simple outlines of animals for your toddler to identify and colour in.

Building blocks

Building blocks are ideal toys as children can play with them in different ways as they grow and develop, from building towers to using the blocks in their imaginative play.

Building blocks that slot together are great for building tall towers.



- Ask your toddler to build a tower and count the bricks as he builds it.

- Sit next to your child and help him lay a ring of blocks around both of you, to make a den. You could also use the blocks to make pens for farm animals or other toys.



- Make something together from just yellow blocks, then suggest your toddler makes something red, or blue.

- Lay down a trail of blocks for your child to follow, then ask him to lay one down for you.

Rainy day ideas

It's good to have a few ideas up your sleeve for activities to do inside on rainy days. As soon as your toddler seems bored with one activity, move onto the next one.



Bubble-blowing works well indoors. Ask your toddler to chase the bubbles and pop them.

- Put toddler-friendly food, such as cereal, jelly cubes and chopped fruit, into plastic bowls. Put a hand over your toddler's eyes and let her taste each food and guess what it is.

- Coloured party straws can make a versatile toy. Your toddler can sort them into colours, lay them end to end or gather them up and put them in a pot.

- Put a selection of toys or safe, everyday objects into a pillowcase. Ask your toddler if she can guess what each one is through the cloth, then let her pull it out to see if she guessed right.

Toddler gymnastics



Show your toddler different positions and see if he will copy you.

Toddlers have bendy, flexible bodies. Turn over for some simple gymnastic ideas you can try with them. Always be gentle, and stop if your toddler is unsure or you feel uncomfortable.

- Lie down with your knees bent. Get your toddler to lean on your legs, and hold his hands. Gently lift your legs. To go higher, you could hold your toddler's shoulders to stop him from sliding forwards.

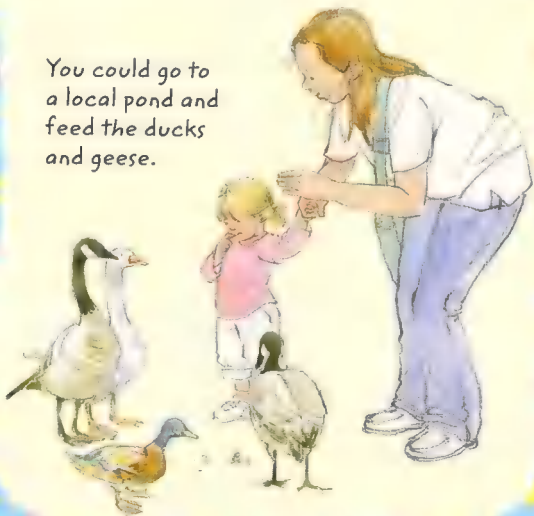
- Sit with your toddler between your knees. Keeping one of his legs bent, help him lift the other leg and let him kiss his toes. Then try the other foot.

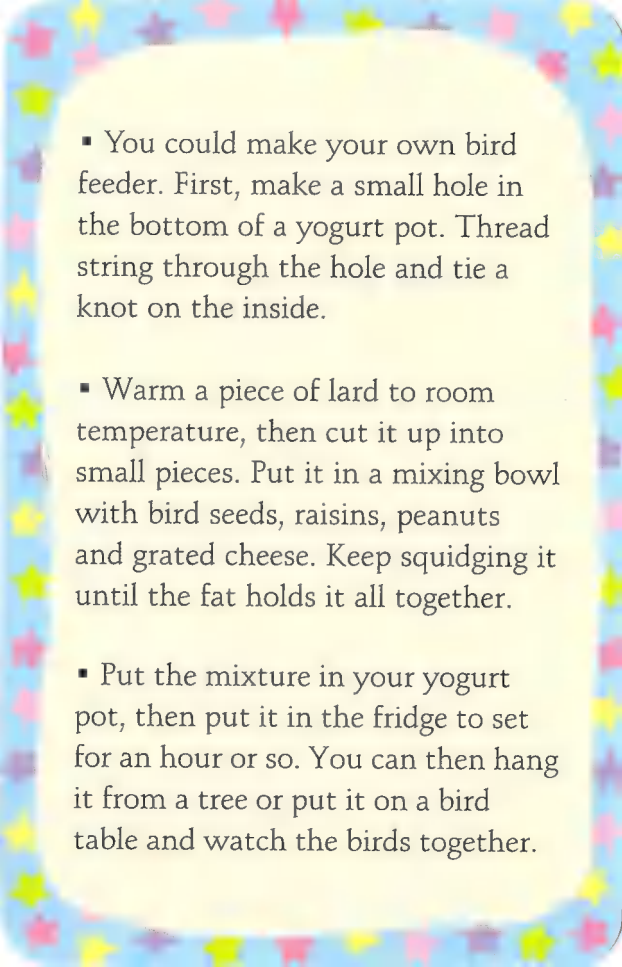
- You could put a mattress on the floor and show your toddler how to flop onto his stomach or encourage him to jump up and down. Make sure you supervise him closely.

Feed the birds

Feeding birds is a good way to introduce your toddler to wildlife. You could hang a bird feeder outside your window or buy one that sticks to your window.

You could go to a local pond and feed the ducks and geese.





- You could make your own bird feeder. First, make a small hole in the bottom of a yogurt pot. Thread string through the hole and tie a knot on the inside.

- Warm a piece of lard to room temperature, then cut it up into small pieces. Put it in a mixing bowl with bird seeds, raisins, peanuts and grated cheese. Keep squidging it until the fat holds it all together.

- Put the mixture in your yogurt pot, then put it in the fridge to set for an hour or so. You can then hang it from a tree or put it on a bird table and watch the birds together.

All about me

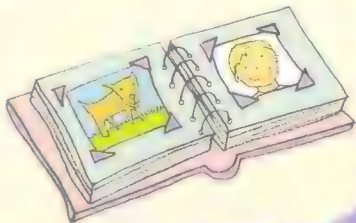
Older toddlers may enjoy the chance to talk about themselves and how they are changing and growing. You could bring out some photos of your toddler when he was a baby and talk about them together.



- Ask your toddler if he remembers when the photos were taken and give him time to answer you.

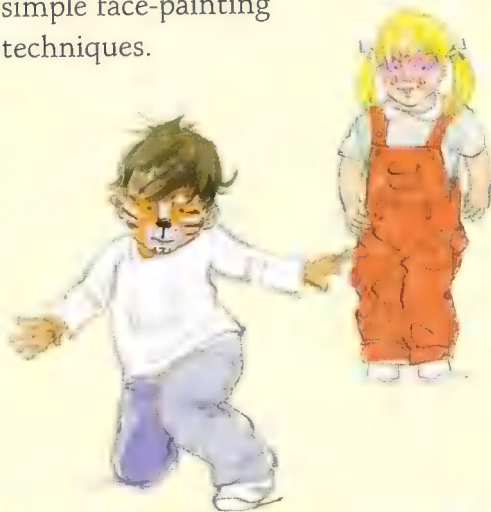
- If you have a box of photos, you could put together a sequence showing your toddler growing up. Talk about how he's changed from his tiny baby days.

- You could stick the photos into a book and add a few words about each one to make a 'Book about me'.



Face painting

Older toddlers often love seeing themselves transformed with face paints. Few will stay still for very long, but you can really add to their make-believe fun with some simple face-painting techniques.



- Use water-based face paints and make sure both of you are wearing old clothes. Make-up sponges work well for applying face paints. Use a fine brush to add detail.

- Let your toddler have a go, although just before bathtime might be an ideal time.

- If you can't face the mess, you could make simple masks instead, using card. Cut out holes for eyes, colour in the detail and attach elastic around the back to hold the mask in place.



Growing things



Try to grow
things that your
toddler can eat.

If you want your toddler to watch things grow, try planting some cress seeds. Cress grows so quickly, you won't have to wait long for the results.

- Draw eyes, a mouth and a nose on the bottom half of a clean, empty, hard-boiled eggshell.

- Soak a ball of cotton wool in water and put it carefully into the bottom of the shell, then sprinkle on some cress seeds. You'll need to keep the cotton wool moist until the seeds sprout.

- Within days, cress 'hair' will grow. You could snip it with scissors and use it in sandwiches.



Kitchen helpers

Toddlers under two can't really cook with you yet, but if you give them an activity to do in the kitchen, they will feel involved. Kitchens can be dangerous places, so never leave your child unsupervised.

Toddlers like to do things in the kitchen that they've seen you doing.

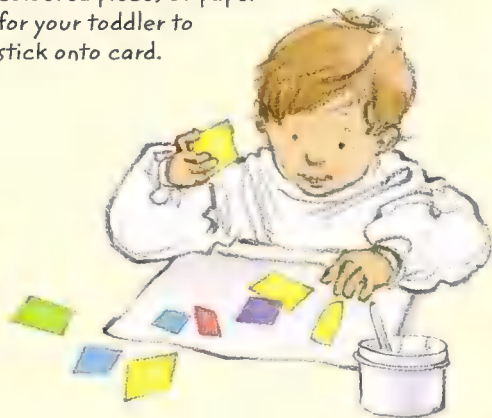


- Let your toddler sort the fruit out, putting apples, bananas and oranges into different bowls.
- Give your toddler a plastic bowl, a small wooden spoon and some oatmeal or cereal to stir.
- If you don't mind a bit of mess, you could give her a bowl of cornflower and water to stir, which makes a lovely gloopy mixture.
- Try letting her stir chopped fruit into yogurt, or cheese into pasta.

Keep your child well away from the oven and keep any dangerous kitchen equipment well out of reach.

Sticky fun

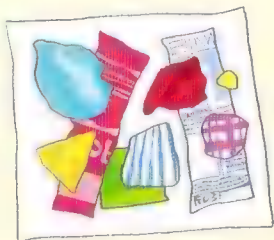
You could cut out different coloured pieces of paper for your toddler to stick onto card.



Toddlers can't handle scissors yet, but most will enjoy sticking things onto paper. You could cut faces out of a magazine and let your toddler stick them onto a sheet of paper.

- Give your toddler a solid glue stick and supervise him using it. For anything heavier than paper, you'll need non-toxic white PVA glue.

- If your toddler likes tearing paper, you could give him old magazines or tissue paper to tear into strips, ready to stick down.



- You could also give your toddler wool, string, foil or leaves, to stick onto cardboard or paper plates.

Wildlife watch

When outside, look out for 'minibeasts' with your toddler. You could count spiders' legs, look for worms wriggling in the earth, or overturn stones in search of woodlice.

Spiders' webs can be fascinating to small children.



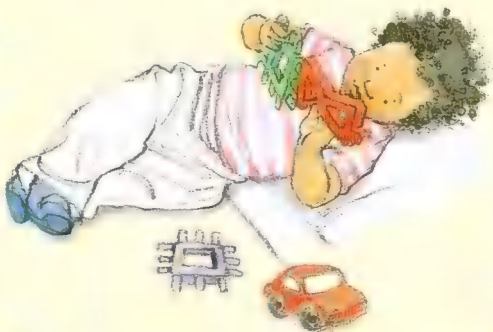
- Give ants crumbs to carry and watch where they take them.
- A magnifying glass makes looking at bugs even better, especially if you can trap the bug in a jar first.
- Visit a pond and point out any wildlife – just keep a careful watch on your toddler near water.
- If you have an old fish tank or a large bowl, keep a snail for a day with some earth and lettuce leaves.

Discourage toddlers from picking up small creatures as their fingers may squash them, and always put bugs back where you found them.

World of colours

Older toddlers may be beginning to get excited about the colours they see around them. If yours seems interested, play colour games, asking your toddler to find toys of different colours.

Ask your toddler to see if they can choose a red toy to go with the red car.



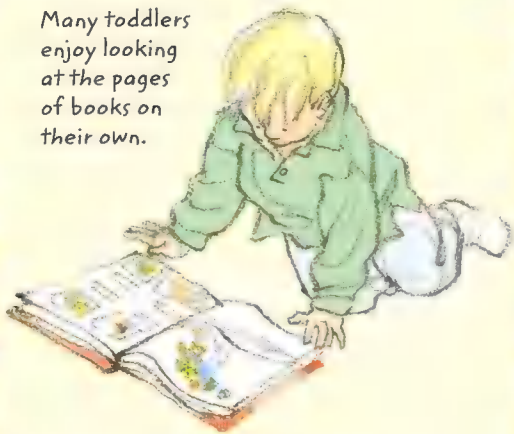
- Point out colours in books, looking for 'six red things' or 'a yellow duck' on a page, for example.

- Go on a 'colour walk'. Begin by showing your toddler something that is the colour you'll be hunting for. Then, as you walk, point out things of the colour you've chosen, such as a blue door or a red bus.

- On your walk, ask your toddler to spot things of the colour you've chosen. On your way back, for example, you could ask him if he remembers where the 'blue door' was, or any other colour objects you've pointed out.

Book time

Many toddlers enjoy looking at the pages of books on their own.



Even though toddlers can't read, many love looking at books and hearing stories. If your child seems bored by a book, just move onto another one.

- Stories about things that are familiar to toddlers, such as teddy bears or other children, are a good place to start.

- Stories with repetition are ideal, as toddlers soon learn to join in with the repetitive parts.

- Books with liftable flaps, tabs or pop-ups are good, as they help children feel involved in the story.



Can you find it?

Most toddlers can understand far more words than they can say. If you ask your child to find items for you, she will probably really enjoy the feeling that she is helping you in some way.

You could ask your toddler to find one of her toys, such as a brick.



- In a shop, you could ask your toddler to spot bananas or apples on the shelves for you.
- If you have a garden, or can visit an outside space, you could continue the activity with a nature hunt.
- You could ask your toddler to bring you a flower, a leaf or a stick, or hunt for nuts in autumn. Show an interest in her finds.

Try to make sure your toddler doesn't pick up anything dirty, and wash her hands afterwards.

Small worlds

As your child gets older, he will be increasingly happy to play on his own. Early role-play is developing at this age, so you could set up pretend play activities with small dolls or cars.

You could set up a pretend tea party for your child to have with his toys.



- Suggest your toddler 'baths' dolls or washes toy cars and trucks with water and a sponge.

- Give your toddler a cardboard box to use in imaginative play, as a doll's house or a garage, for instance.



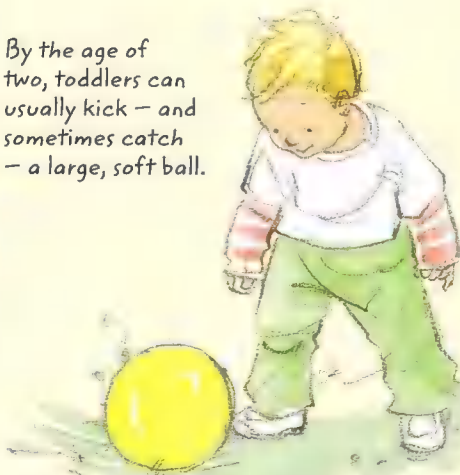
- You could create a den so your child has a private place to play. Peg sheets over the backs of chairs, or drape a large cloth over a small table.

- Keep the toys your child uses in imaginative play in a place where he can easily get them out.

Ball games

Large foam balls and blow-up beach balls are ideal for toddlers to grab and kick, but it's also worth having different-sized balls so children can play a variety of ball games.

By the age of two, toddlers can usually kick – and sometimes catch – a large, soft ball.



- Stand opposite your toddler and gently throw, roll or kick a ball towards him, then ask him to pass it back. If things go well, take a step back each time.

- Play bowls and skittles, indoors or out. Fill some plastic bottles with a little water, screw the lids on tightly, then roll balls at them.



- Show your toddler how to aim a ball into a wastepaper basket. You could hold the basket to help your toddler get the ball in.

Mini-climbers

Climbing helps toddlers burn off their energy as well as improving their co-ordination. Let yours try to climb – just make sure you stay close at hand at all times.

Help your toddler learn to climb the stairs by holding onto the bannisters.



- Set up an obstacle course of chairs, cushions, mattresses and airbeds for your toddler to clamber over.

- Try out your local soft play centre, where your toddler can clamber about in safety.

- You could also take your toddler to the playground and let him go on the climbing frames and slides. Try to go when the playground is quiet, so there aren't too many older children rushing around.

Never let your toddler climb anything without your close supervision as he will be in danger of falling.

Playing with dough



Supervise your toddler when he plays with dough, in case he tries to eat it.

Dough can be a versatile toy. At eighteen months a toddler may just want to squeeze and pummel it, but by two you can encourage your toddler to try to make things with it.

- Roll the dough out flat and let your toddler press patterns into it with cookie cutters, a plastic fork or with his fingers.

- Try making simple models and see if your toddler can guess what they are and copy what you've done, or work alongside your child as he makes his own.



For a recipe for activity dough, go to www.usborne-quicklinks.com and type in the keywords 'entertain toddlers'.

Fun with paint

Most toddlers love painting but can still find holding a paintbrush tricky. Instead, they can use pieces of sponge, cloth, rolled-up tissue paper or just their hands to get paint onto paper.



Put an apron on your toddler and newspaper on the floor to avoid too much mess.

- As your toddler's co-ordination improves, you could give him a medium-sized paintbrush to paint with, or other objects to print with, such as potato or lemon halves.

- Show your toddler how to make fingerprints and try out fingerprint patterns.

- Talk to your toddler about the pictures he's made and display them at home.

Buy washable, non-toxic paints and have a wet cloth to hand, just in case the paint hits the wall.

Drawing

Toddlers need a lot of practice before they can learn to control a crayon.

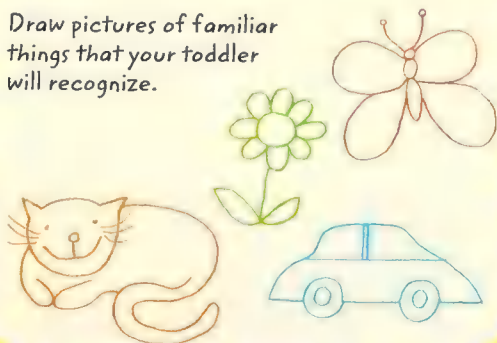


To encourage your toddler to draw 'pictures', try setting up an art area, with a low table or an easel, paper and lots of chunky crayons.

- Ask your toddler to put her hands or feet on paper while you draw around them, then let her try to colour in the outlines. You could also help her draw around your hands and feet.

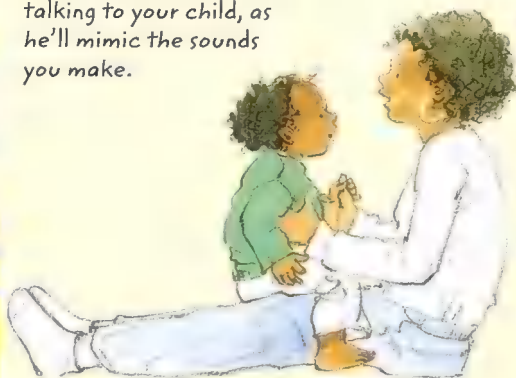
- Try drawing a basic picture for your toddler to colour in, scribble all over or try to copy.

Draw pictures of familiar things that your toddler will recognize.

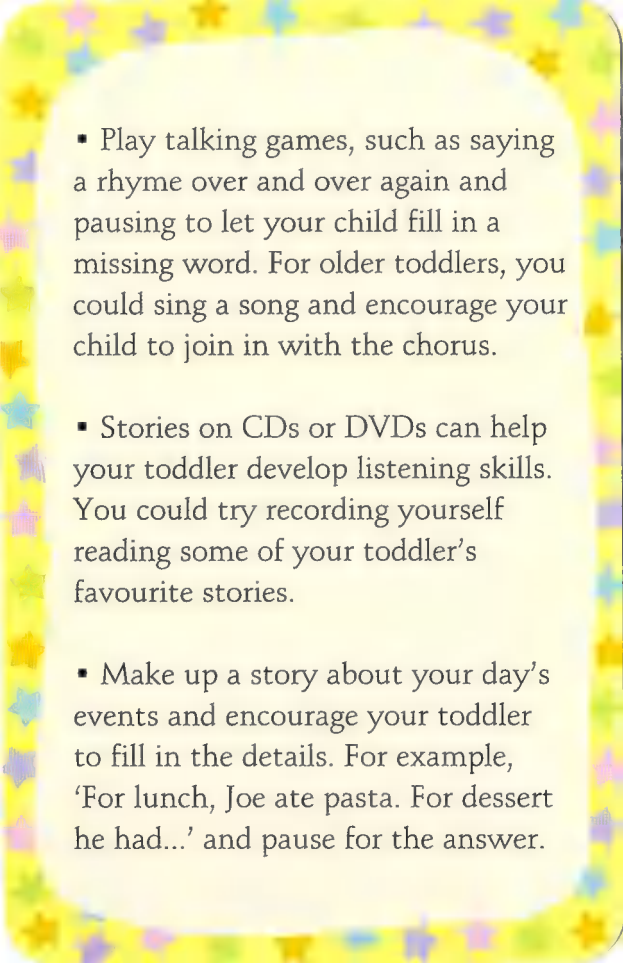


Talk time

Try to speak clearly when talking to your child, as he'll mimic the sounds you make.



Talking to your child will help him learn about speech and language. Speech development varies widely, but your toddler will be learning new words all the time, even if he isn't saying them yet.



- Play talking games, such as saying a rhyme over and over again and pausing to let your child fill in a missing word. For older toddlers, you could sing a song and encourage your child to join in with the chorus.

- Stories on CDs or DVDs can help your toddler develop listening skills. You could try recording yourself reading some of your toddler's favourite stories.

- Make up a story about your day's events and encourage your toddler to fill in the details. For example, 'For lunch, Joe ate pasta. For dessert he had...' and pause for the answer.

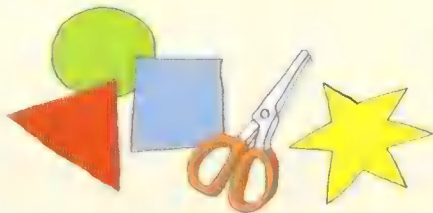
Shapes and sizes

Most toddlers enjoy playing matching games, and older toddlers may be interested in shapes and sizes. Give yours a chance to help you sort laundry, pair up socks or put things of similar shapes together.



*Building blocks
are great for shape-
sorting games.*

- Help your toddler put household objects or toys in size order, saying the size of each thing as she does it.
- Keep using the words 'big' and 'small' for things you see around you.
- Cut some simple shapes out of card. Lay them out and tell your toddler the name of each shape. You could also look for shapes when you're out and about, such as 'rectangle' doors and 'round' road signs.



Animal card



lion

Animal card



zebra

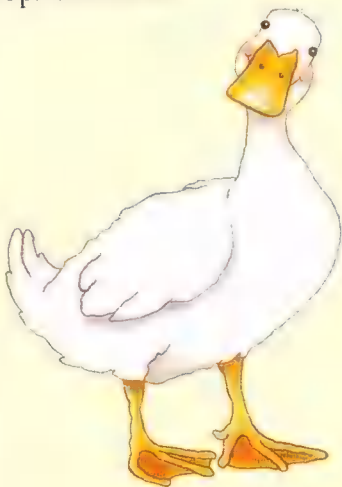
Animal card



monkey

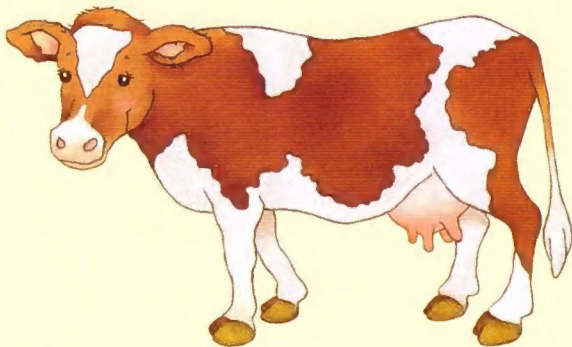
Animal cards

Show the animal cards in this pack to your toddler and ask her to name the animal or make the appropriate noise.



duck

Animal card



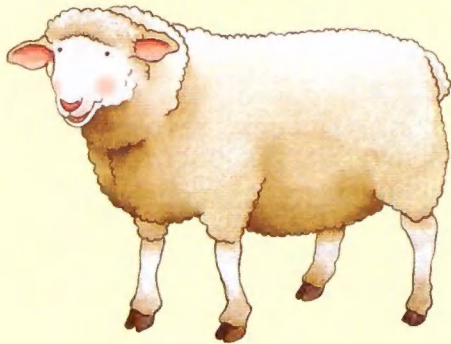
COW

Animal card



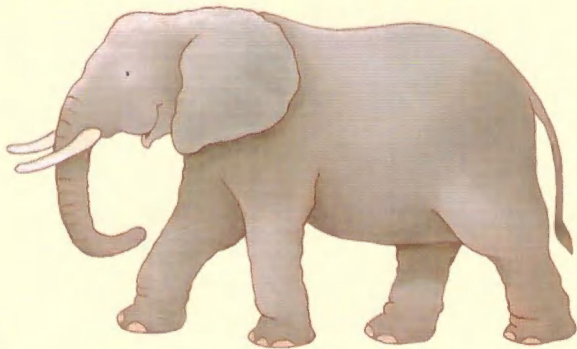
horse

Animal card



sheep

Animal card



elephant